



# YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

President: The Countess of Harewood

Vice-presidents: Lady Legard, Peter Goodchild, Nick Lane Fox

[www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk](http://www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk)

Ms Anna Jacka  
Properties Curator, North  
English Heritage  
37 Tanner Row  
York YO1 6WP  
Anna.Jacka@english-heritage.org.uk

Mrs Val Hepworth  
Trustee  
Conservation and Planning  
[conservation@yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk](mailto:conservation@yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk)

24<sup>th</sup> July 2025

Dear Ms Jacka

## **Pre-application enquiry for Whitby Abbey Ramp to Visitor Centre (Cholmley House).**

Thank you for sending information to the Yorkshire Gardens Trust (YGT) about the English Heritage proposals for a new accessible entrance to Whitby Abbey Visitor Centre - if North Yorkshire Council confirm that planning permission is required.

Cholmley House (also known historically as New House, and the Banqueting House from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards) incorporates the Whitby Abbey Visitor Centre and English Heritage Shop. This building is listed grade I with Abbey House and was erected c.1669-1672 north of the Abbey House which originated as a monastic building. The building is a Scheduled Monument. The Abbey House complex lies at the centre of a series of enclosures and former enclosures and the c.3.5ha site is included by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks & Gardens – Whitby Abbey House at Grade II (List Entry No: 1001467). The gardens were laid out in the early - mid 17<sup>th</sup> century and during the period 1670-1700 possibly incorporating part of a 16<sup>th</sup> century layout.

The proposed works are located within the walkway along the front/north elevation of Cholmley House/Banqueting House/Visitor Centre and we understand from the e-mail from Sally Wilson that English Heritage is proposing to replace a c.20 year old timber ramp with no handrail, as it is a trip hazard and does not meet accessibility requirements.

The advice letter from Historic England notes that they have no overwhelming preference for either the full-width or half width options and we understand that your preferred option is for a half width ramp with a stone perch alongside the ramp on the building side. The low wall/stone perch would provide a seating area. Currently visitors sit on the step side of the existing ramp, so it seems that there is a need for this addition, and it will also minimise the visual impact of more than one handrail. The new stone platform will be in Goathland stone.

We understand that you would also like to add the following details:

- a) fill the eastern gully with a geotextile membrane, overlain with stone flags to match the gully on the west side; and,
- b) the stone perch to have a curved edges to increase comfort levels as a seat.

We note from the e-mail sent to us by Sally Wilson that there could be options to swap the perch for a handrail or planters.

Cholmley House/Banqueting House/Visitor Centre was built by Hugh Cholmley in a new classical style and the historical, aesthetic and communal values of the building are high, therefore in our view planters would not be appropriate on the north elevation and the proposed works should be as low-key as is practical.

The Yorkshire Gardens Trust understands the justification for the proposed works and agrees that improved access provision is required. The English Heritage proposal working with Historic England seems a practical conservation solution and apart from our note in the above paragraph for a low-key intervention we have no further comments.

Yours sincerely,

Val Hepworth  
Trustee Conservation and Planning

cc. Cc Kristof Fatsar, Historic England, [e-yorks@historicengland.org.uk](mailto:e-yorks@historicengland.org.uk); Conservation@ the Gardens Trust.